

MOTION OF J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA,
AT SOUTHERN GOVERNORS' CONFERENCE, WAKULLA SPRINGS LODGE,
WAKULLA SPRINGS, FLORIDA, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1948.

The people of the States represented by the members of this Conference here have been shocked by the spectacle of the political parties of this country engaging in competitive bidding for the votes of small pressure groups by attacking the traditions, customs and institutions of the section in which we live.

Our people have been engaged for many years in a tremendous effort to restore our section to the place in the economy of the nation which it should rightfully occupy. On the solution of our economic problems depend the education, welfare and progress of all of our people and we have spared no effort to solve those problems. Economic under-privilege in the South has known no color line; it has fallen heavily on all races alike. The people of the nation are well aware of the headway which we have already made toward solving the economic problems of our people, and it will be as a result of the solution of our economic problems that our racial problems will disappear.

Despite our sound, constructive and sure progress, the political leaders of the country have been unwilling to respect our accomplishments and to let us continue with the task. Their political attacks are calculated only to hamper our efforts and actually militate against the welfare of the very people whom they assert they are trying to help. Under the compulsion of petty political considerations, they have seen fit to outrage and insult our people because they think we have no place to which we can turn.

Without sincerity and in utter disregard of the facts, they again propose a so-called anti-lynching bill. They ignore the fact that the crime of lynching has been virtually stamped out in the South without outside interference. It is a matter of common knowledge that this legislation would be an unconstitutional invasion of the field of government of the several states.

They have again sponsored a so-called anti-poll tax bill. It is a matter of common knowledge that this type of legislation is an unconstitutional infringement upon the right of the several states to prescribe voting qualifications.

They talk about breaking down the laws which knowledge and experience of many years have proven to be essential to the protection of the racial integrity and purity of the white and the negro races alike. The superficial objections to these laws arise from economic rather than political causes, and their sudden removal would jeopardize the peace and good order which prevails where the two races live side by side in large numbers. As a nation we have favored the protection of racial autonomy and integrity in other lands, such as Palestine and India, but a different doctrine is sought to be applied here at home.

They advocate a so-called Fair Employment Practice law, which every thinking American citizen, upon reflection, will recognize to be an anti-American invasion of the fundamental conception of free enterprise upon which our economic structure is erected and which made America great. The right of a man to own and operate his own business, in which he has his savings and to which he devotes his labor and his energy, is to be impaired or destroyed by governmental interference under the guise of protecting the right to work. In effect, such a law would render every private business in this nation a quasi-public one. Employer and employee alike are adversely affected by this type of legislation, and the concepts upon which it is based are appropriate, not to the American way of life, but only to the economic and political philosophy of the Communist party.

We are expected to stand idle and let all of this happen, for the sole purpose of enticing an infinitesimal minority of organized pressure blocs to vote for one or another candidate for the Presidency. It is thought that we have no redress. This assumption ignores the electoral college set up in the Constitution of the United States.

We should approach the situation thus presented with dignity, self-respect and restraint. We should refuse to be stampeded or to indulge in idle oratory. We must consider the matter calmly and deliberately to the end that by joint and common action and decision we may demand and obtain for our people the consideration and respect to which they are entitled. We must no longer permit pressure groups by their adroit activities to establish by propaganda and political maneuvering a nuisance value for themselves in election years which threatens to defeat the political rights of others and endanger the progress which we in the South have made to better the lot and circumstance of all our people.

Therefore, I move, Mr. Chairman, that this Conference go on record as deploring all ill-considered proposals which have the effect of dividing our people at a time when national unity is vital to the establishment of peace in this troubled world; and that this Conference set a meeting not later than 40 days from this date, at a time and place to be designated by the Chairman, for the careful consideration of the problems of the Southern States arising from such proposals; and that the Chair do appoint a committee from the membership of this Conference to make careful inquiry and investigation into such problems, and their solution by joint and common action, and to report to the Conference at that meeting, with their recommendations as to further action which may be taken in the premises.